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child are prohibited by custom from crossing a stream or washing their clothes until the navel-string falls off, for fear that the child should be attacked by the demons of the hills and the vales.

The Wár birth customs are substantially the same as those of the Khasis, but there is the difference that a Wár family after a birth is *sang*, or taboo, for seven days, whereas amongst the Khasis the only prohibition is that the parents must not cross a stream or wash their clothes until they have propitiated the spirits. A twin birth is *sang*, or taboo. The Khasis argue that as there is but one *Ka Iawbei* (first ancestress), and one *U Thawlang* (first ancestor), so one child, either male or female, should be born at a time. A twin birth is accordingly regarded as a visitation from God for some *sang*, or transgression, committed by some member of the clan. When the twins are of opposite sexes the *sang* is considered to be extremely serious, the Khasi idea being that defilement has taken place within the womb. The case is treated as one of *shong kur*, or marriage within the clan, and the bones of the twins cannot be placed in the sepulchre of the clan.

There are no special birth customs amongst the Lyngams.

There is no trace of the *couvade* amongst the Khasis.

MARRIAGE.

We now come to consider marriage amongst the Khasis from a religious point of view. Shadwell has said that marriage amongst the Khasis "is purely a civil contract." This statement is not correct, for there is an elaborate religious ceremony at which God the creator, *U'lei thaw briew man briew*, the god or goddess of the State, U or *ka'lei Synshar*, and, what is probably more important, the ancestress and ancestor of the clan, *Ka Iawbei-tymmen* and *U Thawlang*, are invoked. There are three marriage ceremonies prevalent amongst the Khasis, which are (*a*) *Pynhiarsynjat*, (*b*) *Lamdoh*, and (*c*) *Iadih-kiad*, respectively. The first and second forms above mentioned are considered the more respectable; the last-named is resorted to by the very poor who cannot afford the greater expense entailed by the first two ceremonies.

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[582] 584 *Preliminaries.*—A young man of marriageable age, say between seventeen or eighteen years of age and twenty-five, fixes upon a girl of, say between thirteen and eighteen years, as likely to become a fitting partner; probably he has been acquainted with the young woman for some time before, and is on more or less easy terms of intimacy with her. He mentions the name of the girl to his parents, and uncles and aunts in the house, and they agree or disagree, as the case may be. Sometimes marriages are arranged by the parents of the young people themselves. Having agreed regarding the fitness of the bride, the young man's parents send a male representative of the family, or in some cases a man unconnected with the family, to arrange matters with the parents of the bride. The latter then ascertain their daughter's wishes. According to the late U Jeeban Roy, the daughters nearly always agree, it is very seldom that it is necessary to bring any pressure to bear. The parents then investigate whether there is any *sang*, or taboo, such as clan relationship, between the young woman and her intended, in the way of the marriage. If there is found to be no such hindrance, they fix a date for finally 787 arranging the marriage (*bau ia kut ktien.*) On the day appointed 585 the bride's family consult the auspices by breaking eggs and 842 examining fowls' entrails. If the omens are favourable, well 735 and good. Should they be unfavourable, they abandon the 761 marriage project. There is a strong prejudice against a marriage taking place under unfavourable auspices, the belief being that such an union will be childless, that the bride will 585 die an untimely death, or that poverty will ensue. Given favourable auspices, the parents fix a day for the marriage. It was formerly the custom for the bridegroom to provide himself beforehand with a ring, usually of silver, but, amongst the rich, of gold, which is called *ka synjat* (hence the name of the marriage ceremony *pynhiar-synjat*), and for the bride to provide herself with a similar ring. The bridegroom used to place his ring upon the bride's finger, and the bride used to place her ring upon the bridegroom's finger; it is however believed that this custom is rare nowadays. On the marriage day a man is selected from the party of the bridegroom called *u ksiang*, or go-between. The bridegroom then sets out with

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The bridegroom then sets out with this man and a number of followers, clothed in clean garments and wearing either white or red pagris (a black pagri not being considered a fitting head-dress on this occasion), to the house of the bride, where a feast has been prepared, and fermented rice-beer (*ka-kiad-hiar*) in gourds (*klong*) placed ready. The bride, her female attendants, and her mother and aunts have collected in the meantime, dressed in their best, wearing their jewellery, and with their heads uncovered, for it is not thought proper for the females to cover their heads on the marriage day. On the side of the bride, also, a *ksiang* (go-between) has been appointed, and it is his duty to manage all the business of the marriage on behalf of her family. Some young men of the bride's party go to meet the bridegroom's contingent by way of doing them honour. When they have reached the bride's house, the *ksiang* of the bridegroom enters first, followed by the bridegroom, and after him the bride-groom's party. The *ksiang* then hands over the bridegroom to the maternal uncle (*kni*) of the bride, or to the bride's father. Either of the latter then provides the bridegroom with a seat next the bride. The bride and bridegroom exchange bags of betel-nut, and where the custom of investiture of the ring is in vogue, these tokens are interchanged. The *ksiangs* of the bridegroom and bride recite the marriage contract in lengthy formulae, which may be found on pages 6, 7, 8 of the late U Jeebon Roy's interesting notes on the Khasi religion. The two *ksiangs* then take up, each of them, a gourd containing fermented liquor from the gourd provided by the contracting party, and give them to an old man who is versed in sacrificial lore, who solemnly mixes the contents together. Three dried fish are produced, and are placed on the floor of the house. The priest thus appointed then solemnly adjures the gods in the following words :—

Hei, oh god from above; oh god from below; oh *'lei synshar*; oh god who hast created man; as thou hast ordained this marriage, the ring has been given this day; thou wilt know; thou wilt hear; from the clear firmament above that . . . . have been married this day. Thou wilt bless them; thou wilt grant them prosperity; thou wilt show them the way; thou wilt show them the road, that they may be well, that they may obtain dwellings and houses,

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585 788 that they may prosper, that they may obtain rice and fish, that they may possess hundreds and thousands; thus, oh god." The priest then pours liquor on the ground three times from the gourd, counting "one, two, three." He then continues the invocation thus, "*Hei*, thou, oh mother; oh grandmother; oh maternal uncle; oh father: oh *Suid-nia;* oh younger grandmother; oh elder grandmother; oh younger grandfather; oh elder grandfather. As the flesh has fallen (on the floor, i.e. the feast has been prepared), the ring has been put on, the three strips of flesh are ready (alluding to the three dried fish already mentioned), you will all of you (ancestors) give ear, you will continue giving strength and spirit (i.e. to the married pair) that they may be well" (and so on, as written in the first invocation). He then pours out the liquor three times as before. He then adjures the Siem, the elders, and all the people who do not belong to either of the two clans, and pours out liquor three times as before. The three pieces of dried fish are first placed on the *tympan*, the high rack above the fire-place, then removed and tied to the ridge-pole of the house, amidst shouts of 585 *Ho, hoi, hoi, hoi.* The poor then sacrifice a fowl, and the 769 rich a pig without blemish (*uba tlem*), to *u Suid nia* and *ka Iaw-bei* (the spirits of deceased ancestors of the family), and present them with *dykhot*, or pieces of flesh. Two or three days afterwards, the bride, accompanied by her female relatives, pays a visit to the bridegroom at his house, and after this they go and come as they like to one another's houses. 591 After two or three children have been born, they take down the 782 pieces of dried fish from the roof and sacrifice two pigs, one on behalf of the husband and another on behalf of the wife. Then they say there can be no possible *sang*, and husband and wife use each other's things and pool their earnings, and if the husband has a house of his own, the wife can go and live with him; this, however, is not the custom amongst many of the Syntengs, who more strictly observe the principles of the 585 matriarchate. The cost of the marriage ceremonies amongst 435 Khasis, Syntengs and Wárs, may be put down at between Rs. 50 and Rs. 200 according to the position of the parties.

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LAMDOH CEREMONY.

This ceremony is identical with that of *Pynhiar synjat*, except that the bride and bridegroom do not interchange rings, and that there is no sacrifice of the pig. The parties merely buy some pig's flesh and perform a puja with a small portion of the flesh of the legs of the animal. Amongst the poor, fish sometimes takes the place of pork at the *Iadih-kiad* ceremony. The latter consists of a drinking bout mingled with muttered sentences by a *nongkinia* (sacrificer), the invocations and prayers being the same as at the *Pynhiar synjat*. The *Lamdoh* and *Iadih-kiad* ceremonies take the place of the more elaborate *Pynhiar synjat* in most places now-a-days.

LYNNGAM MARRIAGES.

The ritual observed at these marriages is described as under:—First of all a proposal is made in the following manner. A *ksiang*, or go-between, is sent, with the brother of the girl for whom a husband is required, to the house of the father of the young man (not to the house of the mother as is the case with the Khasis). If the proposal is accepted, the father of the young man kills a pig, and gives a feast to the people of the village of his father-in-law elect; also to the go-between and the *borang* (brother of the bride). The father of the bride then gives a similar feast. A sum of Rs. 1 each is given as a present to the go-between by the fathers of the bride and bridegroom, and the father of the bride pays from Rs. 5 to Rs. 15 to the father of the bridegroom. Further feasting ensues at the house of the father of the bride. The go-betweens then sacrifice a pig and two fowls at the house of the bridegroom, and afterwards perform the same sacrifice at the house of the bride. At the house of the bride, after the fowls and the pig have been sacrificed, the go-between, after drinking liquor himself, pours out some on the floor of the house and then gives some to the bride and bridegroom to drink. The killing of the fowls, the sacrifice of the pig, and the libation of liquor are essentials at a Lynngam marriage. The sacrifice of the fowls is also an essential feature

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of a Garo marriage. The Lynngams, unlike the Garos, do not observe which way the beaks of the fowls turn when they are thrown on the ground after being sacrificed. The Lynngams, like the Khasis, take auguries from the entrails of the fowls and the pig. After these ceremonies are over, the Lynngam pair are allowed to cohabit. The cost of an ordinary Lynngam marriage is from Rs. 30 to Rs. 40. The marriage system in vogue among the Lynngams may be described as a mixture of the Khasi and Garo customs. As has already been stated, the Lynngams are a mongrel breed of Khasis and Garos.

CEREMONIES ATTENDING DEATH.

The death customs of the Khasis are not only very elaborate, but possess a significance of their own, it is, therefore, necessary to describe them in detail; they are as follows:—

A member of the family bends down towards the ear of the apparently deceased person and calls him or her by name three times, to make sure that death has occurred. If no answer comes, the family laments, for it is then concluded that the person is really dead. The body is then bathed in warm water from three earthen pots and is reverently laid on a mat (*japung*), where it is dressed in white cloth, a peculiar feature of the dressing being that the waist-cloth and turban are folded from left to right, and not from right to left, as in the case of the living. An egg called *u'leng kpoh* is placed on the stomach of the deceased, and nine fried grains, of *riw hadem*, or Indian corn, are tied round the head with a string. The rich place ear-rings in the ears and other jewellery on the body of the deceased, it being necessary that this jewellery should be specially made for the occasion, and they deck the corpse with valuable cloths. A cock, *u'iar kyad lynti* (literally the cock that scratches the way), is sacrificed, the idea being that a cock will scratch a path for the spirit to the next world. A sacrifice of a bull, or of a cow in case the deceased is a woman, (*u* or *ka masi pynsum*,) follows. Portions of the left leg of the fowl and the lower part of the jaw of the bull or cow are kept, to be placed afterwards in the *mawshieng*, or bone,

8: Gurdon G-3 (no date) 1904 AR7 Khasi AR7

child is a female. Up to the present time I have not discovered any trace of the *couvade.*

6. *Marriage ceremony.*—Marriage is a purely civil contract. The most prominent features of the Khasi marriage are the following:—

(*a*) The *pynhiar synjat*, or betrothal.

(*b*) The pouring out of libations of liquor to *Ka Iawbei* (the first maternal ancestress).

(*c*) The eating by bride and bridegroom out of the same plate.

(*d*) The mixing of liquor by the *ksiangs*, or go-betweens.

(*e*) The taking of the bride to the house of mother of the bridegroom, where a ring is placed on her finger by her mother-in-law.

7. *Divorce* can be easily obtained amongst the Khasis. Adultery, want of issue, and incompatibility of temper, are some of the more frequent causes. The usual ceremony of divorce is as follows:—The husband hands the wife five cowries, or pice. The wife hands these back to the husband, with five of her own. The man then either throws them away or hands them over to some village elder, who throws them away. Divorce is then complete.

8. *Death, ceremonies.*—The corpse is bathed and laid on its back. A fowl's egg (*ka'lengkypoh*) is then placed on the navel. A cock (*ka' iarkrad lynti*=the fowl that scratches the way) is sacrificed. The limbs of the fowl and its feathers are placed in a bamboo basket, which is hung up near the head of the corpse. Rich people sacrifice a cow also, called *ka masi pynsum.* When a cow is sacrificed it is shot through the heart with an arrow. From the time of bathing the body till it is burned, offerings are offered daily; these offerings are called *ai ja miet ja step.* It is the custom amongst some to place the corpse in a long narrow box or coffin, which has been hollowed out of the trunk of a tree; this is called *ka shyngoid.* When this procedure is adopted, a small pig, which is killed by a spear (*u narsuh*) is sacrificed. This sacrifice takes place during the night. A goat (*U lang sait kwid*=a goat to wash the devil)—which is believed to be a scapegoat to bear the sins of the deceased—is sacrificed. The corpse is then taken outside and placed on a bamboo bier (*ka krong*). When the *shyngoid* is used it is placed inside the bier. Some rice is scattered on the ground, and water is poured from a *lhota.* On arrival at the burning-place, the bier, with the corpse in it, is placed on the pyre, or *jingthang.* The egg placed on the navel is then broken on a plank and a fowl (*Ka iar padat*) is sacrificed. Two arrows are shot, one to the east and another to the west (this is a Khasi custom only); the arrows are intended for the protection of the spirit on its way to another world. Fire is then applied to the pyre.

14:Roy I-5 (no date) 1938 AR7 Khasi AR7

else that we do is instinct with a *plus*; and for the student of religion or of human culture in any of its forms, to account for that *plus* is the sum and substance of his task.....Whereas, then, there is likelihood that any *a posteriori* reason existed for believing that in-breeding makes for sterility, if indeed it be true in fact at all, there might well have been an *a priori* conviction to much the same effect based simply on a fear that to tamper with the fountain-head of human vitality would somehow cause it to dry up." The Khasi stands in the world as exogamous in his rule of life, and he says '*sang bad byrsieh*', that is, endogamy is forbidden and if it should ever be committed it will render life defiled and corrupt. He says this out of the fear of the knowledge that any act of carelessness in the prohibited area of the source of human life and vitality, which is in the Khasi phrase '*long briw*' (*long* is to be or become, *briew* is man, i.e., to be or become man), will make that source of human life to dry up. So he says, 'duh I jaid I khong' (*duh*=is exterminated; *jaid*= kind, species; *khong*=root).

In refutation of such aspersions as that the Khasi has no rules of marriage, I shall quote the most sacred pronouncement the Khasi when two persons, the man and the woman, are initiated into that state. Calling upon the name of God the Khasi says—"*U Lei thaw briew man briw, u' Lei ne ka 'Lei synshar'*, (God who creates man and is the source of human life, God who keeps, controls, preserves), "*Hei ko Blei na jrong, Ko*

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Blei na tbian, ko Lei Synshar, Ko Blei triw, man briw, kumba la hukum kumba bhu ma phi U Blei ka Blei ban long I Kha I man, kumba la pynhiar ka synjat mynta ka sgni, ba phin tip, ba phin sngew na jrong ho kyndiang ba ita I jaid bad ita I jaid ki la iapoi kha poi man ban iaroi ban ia man ban ia heh ka long kynthei ka long shynrang', Oh God from above, oh God from below, Thou God who controllest, who keepest and preservest, Thou God who createst man and the origin and source of human life,—as ordained by Thee, Oh God, U Blei (God in the male aspect), Ka Blei (God in the female aspect) that there should be *I Kha* (person to bear and give birth) *I man* (person with whom and through whom to give cause to life and to grow), as token has been brought down this day, [a ring is given], so that Thou mayest hear clearly from above, that such and such *jaid* (kind, clan) and such and such a *jaid* (kind, clan) have become joined in marriage in order to increase, in order to grow, so as to increase the state of being female and the state of being male (i. e. male and female population)." [This is said as a woman of a certain clan always marries a man of a different clan.] As I have said elsewhere, "There is no tradition among the Khasis that there was ever a time when the status of marriage did not exist among our ancestors. There is a belief among the Khasis that they were instructed in their religion and that their ceremonies and rites were delivered by God Himself to the

582 585 539 581 773

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

178 no polygynists, though there were many personal temporary illicit
184 relations or love affairs.

595 It is true that even in interior villages polygyny is rapidly decreasing. In the two villages I found only two cases of polygyny: a man with two wives in Sohkynduh (Josio in List 6, whose wives are 26 and 32), and a man with three wives in Kongton (Jubongrai in List 9, whose wives are 8, 20 and 52). These cases appeared clearly as cases of polygyny which the villagers recognized as such, speaking of them quite differently from the way they would have spoken of lovers, calling them wives and husbands. Of course, the first wife socially outranks the secondary wives, as *ka tynga trai*, and the term *ka tynga tuh* is used for the latter, as Gurdon states (1914, p. 80). The difference being that the first wife has a legal marriage ceremony while the
• 585 others have not—*ka tynga tuh* means literally 'stolen wife.' About
595 the marriage ceremony, Gurdon gives a detailed discription (*ibid.*, pp. 127-130) and says there are three forms of marriage ceremonies, *Pynhiarsynjat*, *Lamdoh* and *Iadih-hiad*. The first and second forms are considered the more respectable; the last one is resorted to by the very poor who cannot afford the greater expense entailed by the first two. Unfortunately, during my stay in these villages, no marriage ceremony took place, but villagers described to me what seems to be the *Iadih-hiad*, where only a fowl is sacrified, and the whole procedure is much simpler than that described by Gurdon. However, whatever the complexity and richness may be, there is a distinct line between having a ceremony and not having it, and this draws the distinction between the status of the first wife and that of the secondary wives.

428 Nevertheless, this distinction has more of a social bearing than the
595 legal bearing it has in a patrilineal system. Since they follow the
851 matrilineal system, the legal distinction between the first wife and the secondary wife does not affect their children's status and their property rights, at least not in the villages where I worked. The children's social locus is determined by their mother. The children (particularly the youngest daughter) have the right to inherit their father's acquired property which is automatically under their mother's ownership. If the polygynist father has acquired property by working their mother's field, or in trading on behalf of their mother, whether she be the first wife or the second, this property undoubtedly belongs to the children of that wife, not to the first wife alone. The father's physical locus at the time of his economic realisations is the decisive factor.

591 The Khasi polygynist, without bringing his wives into one house-
595 hold, alternates his residence among them, in turn or according to his temper. This practice is similar to that of the Trukese described by Goodenough (1951, p. 123), and quite different from that of the Garo

ing from the time it consists of an elementary family until it grows to a local descent group four generations deep. [Cf. Chattopadhyay 1941.] **Kin terminology.** The terms of address given below are also terms of reference except where otherwise indicated, and are uniform for male and female speakers. They were collected in an upland Khasi village near Shillong (cf. Ehrenfels 1953 for some regional variants).

Fa	*pa*
Mo	*mei*
FaElBr	*pasan*
FaYoBr	*pakhynnah*
FaSi	*kha*
Fa youngest Si	*khaduh*
MoElSi	*meisan*
MoYoSi	*meinah*
Mo youngest Si	*meiduh*
MoElBr	*mama, kni*
MoYoBr	*bah (ref.: kni)*
ElBr	*bah khynnah*
Eldest Br	*kong bah*
YoBr	*bah deng*
Youngest Br	*bah duh*
ElSi	*deng*
Eldest Si	*lud, kong*
YoSi	*lud nah, lud ri*
Youngest Si	*khatduh*
MoSiSo, MoSiDa	*para (ref., para or kmie)*
FaBrSo, FaBrDa	*para (ref.: parakha)*
MoBrSo, MoBrDa, FaSiSo, FaSiDa	*bakha*

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY. **Mode.** According to the traditional courtship pattern, a group of young male relatives and friends made nightly visits to the house of some virgin girl in another village, appraising her through banter while she and her parents appraised them, and staying the night to avoid the dark walk home. Marriage was according to the wishes of the parents after negotiation by a go-between from the boy's side. Girls might be 15, and boys 17, years of age. Girls have now acquired freedom of movement through attending school, however. Premarital sexual play is common, and young people choose their own spouses when the girl is about 19 and the boy 21. The most common mode of marriage is elopement, for Christians and non-Christians alike, but some Christians marry in church, and some Khasis still marry according to the traditional ceremony or some variation on it. There are no preferred or prescribed marriage types, nor is there a bride price or dowry. **Form.** Monogamy is the ideal for all. **Extension of incest taboos.** Sibs are exogamous. Other prohibited marriage partners are real and classificatory FaSi and FaBr, FaBrCh, FaMo, and FaMoMo. The MoBrWi is also prohibited. Boy

household deities, and measles and smallpox deities. Deities of the first two categories are simply aspects of the high God or Goddess. • The earth is peopled with two great orders of land demons and water demons who cause all undesirable, unnatural, and otherwise inexplicable events, acting either on their own or as instruments in the hands of sorcerers. Apart from omens, both in nature and in dreams, Khasis attach supernatural significance also to mystic numbers, and to the colors white, black, and red. They hold especially important folk beliefs regarding betel nut, paddy rice, gold and silver, and clothing.

Practitioners. The two classes of religious practitioners are the village or state priests and the sacrificers. Both are male. They use the same divinatory techniques of reading broken eggshells and the entrails of cocks, and they both sacrifice cocks, hens, goats, pigs, and cattle. Their skills are not taught to them so much as picked up by observation and confirmed by demonstrations of efficacy. A priest is elected from among the men of his sib to direct his skills to the public good until he dies, and his rewards are institutionalized and come from the village or the state. A sacrificer acts for private persons or kin groups, on call, and is rewarded by them personally with gifts in cash or in kind. The sacrificer is called upon to explain and then to ritually remedy every variety of misfortune, especially illness, though his powers are nowadays regarded with ambivalence, and he is widely expected to become a sorcerer sooner or later. • There are two major types of sorcerer. One is the ritual specialist or sacrificer who secretly turns his skills from good to evil, manipulating demons to injure a person or kin group, and acting always for himself alone out of considerations of jealousy or revenge. The other is normally a leading citizen, a woman who is so wealthy and successful that it is believed that she must keep a *thlen*, i.e. a creature which will bring her prosperity as long as she feeds it periodically with human blood. To provide this blood, the men of her household, or other males whom she bewitches with a special whisky, will indiscriminately murder anyone except a member of her matrilineage. The Jaintias have an analogue to the *thlen* in their *taro*, except that the ultimate result is death from illness rather than murder. Minor witchcraft can be perpetrated by poison keepers or persons with an evil eye, who are often women.

Ceremonies. The important traditional ceremonies were the life-crisis rituals relating to pregnancy and childbirth, the naming of a child, and death. Lesser ceremonies related to marriage and divorce, and to housebuilding. All these rituals were addressed primarily to the ancestors, and they are still performed in modified form by many Khasis. Other rituals, which were performed by groups such as villages, sibs, local descent groups, or households, were addressed to the unnamed aspects of the high